

# 2nd Annual High School Local History Smackdown

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## Coach's Guide

### Introduction

In 2002, the [MTU Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections](#), and [Keweenaw National Historical Park](#) (the co-organizers of the Fourth Thursday in History series) developed the idea for an annual High School Local History "Smackdown" contest. Dedicated to promoting understanding and appreciation for local history, historic preservation, and learning, the Fourth Thursday in History team wanted to encourage young people to get excited about local history. To do that, (or to that end) the team decided to organize a fast-paced, competitive, and fun local history contest for high school students to participate in. Working with area teachers, the "Smackdown" team organized a format, developed rules, enlisted the help of dozens of people and institutions and began to present the idea of the contest to area high school students and their teachers. Last year's resulting Smackdown event was the culmination of many people's efforts to excite young people about history.

The Fourth Thursday in History series' first Smackdown event turned out to be a tremendous success. On a cold, starry February night in Lake Linden's historic Little Gem Theater, fifteen teams vied for the right to be called "2003 Smackdown" champions. With local radio personality Dick Storm calling out local history and geography questions, the teams battled through 10 rounds of double elimination until a winner was decided. That first champion, Lake Linden High School's "Lakes 2," now proudly displays the Smackdown Trophy at Lake Linden-Hubbell High School. Amazingly for a first time event, over 60 students and coaches participated in the first Smackdown, and nearly 120 parents, friends, and local history fans cheered them on.

In a follow-up questionnaire a local teacher who had coached one of the Smackdown teams wrote:

"This was a high-quality program that left my students and I more interested in local history (and geography). I appreciated the attention to detail: letters and reminders, clear information, great follow-up. A special function the Smackdown served was to give my students an opportunity to be on a team and to be cheered for

in a joining effort. Our school is too small for most team sports, so this was a unique, well-received experience. We had an assembly to recognize the participants, and it was a great school-spirit event. The younger students are eager to be on the team in future years. Thank you!"

It was reactions like these that encouraged the Fourth Thursday in History team to continue the Smackdown. We appreciate your involvement in this exciting educational event, and thank you for your effort and time in this endeavor. We join your students in thanking you for your support. We look forward to meeting your team!

## Registration

Please insure your team is registered by filling out the [registration form](#) and mailing, faxing, or emailing it by the entry deadline of **March 01, 2004**. Please indicate on the form any special needs.

## Preparing a Team

This is a fun event. Preparation for the Smackdown can be at whatever depth you as coach decide. However, to be able to last into the later rounds when the questions become more difficult, your team(s) will need to prepare. Encourage your students to become familiar with the [list of broad topics](#) and with the [resources for local history](#) on the Question and Answer sheet. While it is important for the participants to have a broad knowledge of local history and geography, remember that each team has four members. You may wish to have the team divvy up the topics and ask each team member to specialize in a set of those topics.

Encourage your students to visit local history sites, look up local history on the internet, talk to older Copper Country family and friends about their lives, read, visit local archives and libraries, and look at maps. Bear in mind that questions will be about the history and geography of all four counties: Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon. Beyond topically, geographic responsibility may be another way the students could divide contest preparation.

In addition to developing broad local history knowledge, teams may also want to practice for the event itself. Review "The Rules" section of this guide with your team. Drilling in advance of the event with practice questions can be helpful in reducing stage fright and general nervousness. Remind your team to just have fun!

## The Venue

Located at 340 Sixth Street in Calumet, the [Calumet Theatre](#) has been a center for Copper Country culture since its opening on March 20, 1900 when the touring Broadway production of Reginald DeKoven's *The Highwaymen* appeared on its stage. During the next 30 years, the theater's marquee read like a Who's Who of American Theater: Madame Helena Modjeska, Lillian Russell, John Phillip Sousa, Sarah Bernhardt, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Lon Chaney, Sr., and Jason Robards, Sr., all graced its stage, just to name a few. With the advent of the motion picture, stage productions became less common. From the depression through the late 1950s, the Calumet Theatre was used almost exclusively as a movie theater. With the return of summer stock in 1958, the theater once again began to be used for live stage productions.

The theater's auditorium was renovated for the village's centennial in 1975, and the exterior was restored in 1988-89. Technical and code improvements as well as backstage reconstruction have recently been completed.

The Calumet Theatre Company, an independent, non-profit cultural organization dedicated to bringing high-quality events to the Copper Country and maintaining and restoring the Calumet Theatre is providing this venue free of charge for the Smackdown.

The [Calumet Theatre](#) is a National Historic Landmark.

## Overview of the Event

This competition has been designed to test the general local history knowledge of your team in a fun, fast-paced, and mildly competitive atmosphere. We hope your students will find their interest in local history broadened and strengthened by their participation in this event.

It is very important that your team(s) arrive together by no later than 6:30 PM. Your team will need to check in with event organizers to receive their t-shirts, seating assignments, and contest instructions. As the event is on a Thursday night with teams coming from throughout the four-county Copper Country region, many with long drives home, the event will start promptly at 7:00 PM. Teams not checked in by the start of the event will not participate.

Coaches and students will be seated on the Calumet Theatre stage for the competition. No food or drink is permitted in the theater. The coach is responsible to insure the contestants participate in an orderly manner and to control out-of turn answering or talking. The coach does not participate in the questioning.

The stage is accessible to disabled students from the alley behind the theater. Please notify event organizers when registering your team if any contestant will need help to access the stage.

Please encourage your teams to participate throughout the competition, even if they are eliminated. There will be contestant prizes awarded to all the teams at the conclusion of the event and of course the "Smackdown" trophy will go to the "last team standing." The trophy, like the Stanley Cup, is a traveling trophy and must be successfully defended each year to be retained.

## **The Rules**

*Participation:* Only pre-registered four-person teams that have checked in by the start of the event may participate. Alternates may be utilized if a pre-registered contestant is absent, as long as they are checked in prior to the beginning of the event. If a team is checked-in by start time, and is short one player it may still participate, but will do so with only three contestants. Individual contestants who arrive after the Smackdown has started will not be allowed to join their team.

*Order of appearance:* Determined by the order in which team registrations were received.

*Questions:* In order, each team will be asked by the Quizmaster a "short-answer" local history question. The question will be repeated and then the team will be allowed 15 seconds to discuss possible answers. At the end of the 15 seconds a buzzer will sound and the team will be asked to provide an answer. (Each question will be used only once during the contest.) The questions increase in difficulty with each round. Teams may not "pass" on an answer.

*Answers:* One team member will provide the team's answer. (That "spokesperson" should be selected before the competition begins.) The Quizmaster will indicate if the answer is correct or incorrect.

*Contested answers:* Team responses that are not clearly correct will be referred (by the Quizmaster) to the three-judge panel. The three judges

will confer and must agree that the answer was correct. The judges' ruling is final.

*Audience provided answers:* Following the reading of the question and while a team is consulting each other, if an audience member shouts an answer out that is audible to those on stage, the Quizmaster may skip that question and ask the team another.

*Elimination:* If your team provides two incorrect answers they will be eliminated from further questioning. The round in which they provided their second incorrect answer will be recorded.

*How the winner is determined:* The only team to have less than two incorrect answers at the end of a round is the winner. If no team finishes the final round with less than two incorrect answers a playoff will be utilized to determine the winner.

*Playoff in event of a tie:* In the event the last round has no team with less than two incorrect answers, the final round teams will participate in an overtime round. Overtime rounds will continue until only one team completes a round with a correct answer.

## **Concluding Ceremonies**

Following the determination of a winner please keep your teams seated until instructed to receive their participation prize. After your team has received their prize please have them return to their seats until all teams have been recognized. The tournament winner will be the last team called forward.

For further information, or to register a team, contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this event!